

Welsh Parliament

**Climate Change, Economy, and Infrastructure Committee**

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# Bus and rail transport in Wales.

Engagement findings report

May 2022

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# 1. Background

As part of the Climate Change, Economy, and Infrastructure Committee's<sup>1</sup> inquiry into 'Bus and Rail Transport'<sup>2</sup>, the Citizen Engagement Team<sup>3</sup> proposed a qualitative approach to engagement, comprising a series of focus groups and interviews with passengers.

## Participants

Participants were sourced through Committee Members, community groups, and organisations including Transport for Wales, the North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum, the Snowdonia Society, GIG Buddies, Rail Future Wales, and Community Transport Wales.

A screening survey was used to identify potential participants. Participant composition varied and included both bus and rail passengers; people with disabilities, people living and working in rural, urban and tourist areas; and business owners.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the programme of engagement.

## Engagement

A series of five focus groups and six one-to-one interviews<sup>4</sup> took place between 21 March and 21 April 2021. The format of engagement was largely comparable between sessions but varied slightly to meet the needs of participants. The following themes were discussed:

- Participants' travel needs.
- What impact the pandemic has had on public transport use.
- The real and perceived barriers to using Welsh bus and rail services.
- How to address the barriers to using Welsh bus and rail services.
- How to encourage behaviour change to increase public transport use.

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<sup>1</sup> [Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee \(senedd.wales\)](#).

<sup>2</sup> [Bus and rail transport in Wales \(senedd.wales\)](#).

<sup>3</sup> [Have your say \(senedd.wales\)](#).

<sup>4</sup> An anonymised transcript of each session is available to Members of the Committee and Commission staff upon request.

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## 2. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on public transport

1. All participants agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic (the pandemic) had a substantial and often negative impact on the provision of public transport and its use. Participants felt that public messaging, safety concerns, service disruption, and a change in passenger needs were key themes.

### Public messaging

2. Participants agreed that Welsh Government messaging, particularly during the first lockdown, scared the public to such a degree that encouraging people to return to public transport will be difficult, if not impossible for some groups.

Public transport was for essential users only. There was a fear that we couldn't go on them. The message was very much that public transport was not for everyday use. They created a perception that public transport wasn't always safe and I don't think that it was true.

The pandemic created such a big challenge because the message that went out was for people to avoid travelling as much as possible. But in the context of a world where we're trying to get more people to use public transport, that was quite a risky message.

Transport for London did thorough tests of the station, infrastructure, and interiors of trains. Despite the London underground having a much higher usage during lockdown, they didn't find any traces of Covid. I'm not downplaying how serious the virus was, and can still be, but there was far too much scaremongering about public transport. It really pushed people away from using public transport.

3. Participants agreed that a substantial effort is needed to reverse the messaging.

You've got two years of the message being "don't use public transport" to overturn, and that's not an overnight thing. You have to build confidence. You have to show, and demonstrate that it's reliable and consistent, and you have to put the passenger first, not the operational needs, not the need for that train to be somewhere else. The passenger has to believe they're going to be looked after. It's a culture change, I suppose.

## Safety concerns

4. Participants felt that many people continue not to use public transport because they are scared as a consequence of the pandemic. Many identified the elderly, vulnerable, and people with health concerns as the most unlikely to return to public transport.

A lot of community transport passengers are older and extremely vulnerable. They were told to shield, stay at home, and protect themselves. We've seen a huge number of people that were regular passengers deteriorate to such an extent that they no longer leave the house.

Unfortunately, particularly among the older demographic, there's a significant number of people that just do not travel anymore. A lot of it is because they're afraid of going back out into the world and particularly using transport as part of that.

My wife and I, who are retired, have not really got comfortable again with public transport at all. We were heavy users of public transport, particularly on the Carnarvon to Bangor line before the pandemic. For a long time, we just did not use public transport at all. We're still somewhat reluctant to do so.

5. However, some participants told of how safe they felt, and continue to feel, using public transport.

I haven't been worried about catching covid on the train, although I'm sure it does worry a lot of people.

At the beginning of the pandemic, I felt a nervousness about travelling on public transport just due to the nature of being told not to be in crowded spaces. I work in a hospital and a lot of my colleagues travelled to work by public transport, so I wasn't nervous anymore because none of them were adversely affected through travelling on public transport, there weren't any issues. So that put my mind at rest. If I needed to take the bus I would. My colleagues were using it day in and day out and there were no issues.

## Service disruption

6. Participants told of reduced services and service disruption due to the pandemic.

My sister has a learning disability and she relies on the bus services to get to work. Quite often the bus didn't show up or the timetable wasn't running to schedule. I think public transport was a bit unreliable during the pandemic, either with late services or buses not showing up at all.

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A real barrier for people during the pandemic was the changes to the timetables and routes on the buses. It was very confusing for some and almost impossible to find up-to-date information.

- 7.** Participants with disabilities described the difficulties and discrimination they experienced due to changes and disruption to services during the pandemic.

There was a big problem with buses not stopping to pick people up. The bus to Llandudno was reduced to one an hour. A lot of the time the drivers would drive straight past me and not even stop, they would ignore me. Because I'm in a wheelchair they thought it would take too long to get the ramp out and give me time to get on the bus. So they didn't bother stopping. It's annoying when drivers don't stop.

Nine out of ten drivers displayed a lot of arrogance and were on a power trip when they got to tell people they couldn't get on the bus. This has left a mark on the people of Llandudno, not just the disabled community but everyone.

- 8.** Participants also spoke of the ongoing disruption in service that they are still experiencing.<sup>5</sup>

In North Wales, the Avanti West Coast service to London was severely curtailed and is still only running two services a day from North Wales to London. There are additional services from Chester but they terminate at Crew. So travel from Chester is, not impossible, but difficult.

There is a particular issue with the rail services along the North Wales coast. The level of service has still not been restored to what it was before COVID. This frustrated me because I'm used to having an hourly service to Chester and Manchester and that service disappeared with the pandemic and hasn't returned.

We have a real problem here in Pembrokeshire in that there are hardly any trains. The train service was decimated over COVID and it still hasn't been put back to the way it should be. We have just three trains. One is completely useless because it deposits you in Carmarthen in the middle of the night. Then the other two are not satisfactory.

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<sup>5</sup> Comments were submitted before 21 April 2022.

## Change in passenger needs

**9.** Participants spoke of the changes in passenger needs and the use of public transport due to the pandemic. The most significant change was perceived to be an increase in car usage.

There's an awful lot of people who re-engaged with their cars and I'm one of them. The car was the safe space and I didn't have to worry about capacity issues, congestion, and people not wearing masks. I was safe in my car and I don't think I'm odd in that respect.

**10.** Participants agreed that the pandemic has changed people's behaviour. Participants spoke of a decline in the use of public transport due to home working and an increase in active travel.

During the pandemic, people got more active by walking and cycling. That's to be encouraged. The train, in particular, should be more cycle-friendly with provisions for bikes at the station and on the train.

Before the pandemic, I was a daily user and I had a monthly ticket. Now I work from home so I use public transport a lot less.

## 3. The real and perceived barriers to using Welsh bus and rail services.

### Connectivity

**11.** Participants agreed that connectivity was a substantial barrier for current and new passengers. Participants spoke of geographical constraints, and tight connection times.

#### North and West Wales

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**12.** Participants agreed that public transport connectivity is a major barrier to using public transport. Participants gave examples of poor connectivity with particular reference to North and West Wales.

Connectivity and integration, for me, are the biggest themes of my decade-plus of living in North Wales. There's a corridor across North Wales, that links from Holyhead, Bangor, Conway, and Chester. And that is reasonably well served for commuters and visitors coming into North Wales on the bus or train. To move beyond that corridor to experience the wider North Wales, whether that be central Snowdonia or the Llyn Peninsula, that is exceptionally difficult, challenging, and time-consuming. I live in Conway and walk to work. But, I am

considering a change of job. I like public transport. I don't particularly like driving and so I'm actually restricting how I look for work to that corridor.

For the working population where I am in Felinheli, we're halfway between two major work centres (If there are such things in North Wales), Bangor and Caernarvon. And we're adequately dealt with in that sense. However, if you wanted to go anywhere else, you would not feel that at all. If you took Anglesey, for example, virtually all routes in Anglesey seem to lead to Bangor, but very little leads to anywhere other than Bangor. That really does affect where people can work and it is wrong to assume that they all work in Bangor.

One of the worst examples of poor connectedness was in December 2019. Great Western started running the new electric trains. It was new and wonderful and it was going faster from Swansea to London. The trouble was they were leaving Swansea seven minutes earlier, but the connections to Pembrokeshire were not connecting to the trains anymore. So you had to wait 55 minutes at Swansea station to get your train. Although the Swansea to London bit was shorter, it was taking you half an hour longer for your overall journey.

I was shocked when I saw what a mess there was at Fishguard Harbour, with the connections with the ferries. It has been embarrassing for all of us who've been involved in public transport to hear about the problems we're having with train and ferry connections in Fishguard. The horror stories that we were listening to. If I was in Stena Ferry management I would have pulled out of the rail sale and just said we're not taking rail passengers anymore because it's too much hassle. If we had a two-hourly train service that would mitigate it to a certain extent because we'd have a train in two hours rather than a train in 12 hours. That might actually help.

- 13.** Several participants from North and West Wales described how the lack of connected public transport impacts their lives.

I live near Bethesda and work in Carnarvon, it's a 20-minute drive to work, but it takes me an hour and a half on the bus. Not being able to get to work in a decent time because of the lack of East to West connectivity makes a commute very difficult.

In North Wales, you can't necessarily cross the valley easily or quickly. I live in Bethesda and work in the North end of the Llanberis valley. To get to work I'd have to go to Bangor first, get a different bus, and then go down the valley rather than being able to go straight across.

If I used public transport I'd have to walk my kids to school, then get the bus into Swansea from where I live, then get the bus out from Swansea to the next town along, and then walk to work. Whereas in the car I can do it in about 20 minutes because there's a road. So, there's no reason why the bus can't go along that road, but it doesn't because it doesn't suit the commercial operators.

In Newport, hardly any buses pass the railway station. The bus that runs along my road goes over the river and then turns left towards Friars Walk towards the bus station. If I want the railway station, the only option I've got is to book the fflecsi bus which has become more challenging recently. Public transport is falling behind the actual needs of its users.

My doctor is the next valley along. I get there by any means other than public transport because to use public transport means a huge loop, involving two or three buses. It would be a day's project to get to the doctors by public transport.

I've got two nurses in the family and they can't even consider using public transport to get to work. And when you think of the size of hospitals like Glangwili or Morriston and you can't get there by public transport to start your shift on time and there's also no service to get you home.

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#### Connection times

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**14.** Participants discussed connection times and the barriers faced when passengers need to switch from one public transport route or mode to another.

One of the big problems is tight connections between different transport systems. Five minutes is not good enough. If anything goes wrong you've missed your connection.

We have a connection coming from say St. David's to Haverford West, it's a 3-minute connection. If you've got a parent with a pram getting off in central Haverford West, they miss the train. If there's a tractor on the route from Saint David's, they miss the train. And the next train is in two hours. You have one of those bad experiences and you won't use the rail unless you have to.

Ferries are also public transport, and the interchange with the ferry in Pembrokeshire is disgraceful. Any people on a late train are stranded for hours, days even. The thing is, the ferry at Fishguard is an international connection because the ferry at Pembroke Dock does not take foot passengers or cyclists, so they can only use Fishguard.

## Journey times

- 15.** Participants spoke of poor journey times as a barrier to using public transport, often as a result of poor connectivity and frequency.

Journey time improvements are really needed. If I was to jump in my car to get to Abergavenny from Pembrokeshire it would take me an hour and a half. It takes 3 1/2 hours by train. If I want to go to Cardiff we have the problem of the dogleg in Swansea.

When I have to attend meetings at Cardiff gate occasionally, I drive from Pembrokeshire because public transport takes too long.

- 16.** Some participants described how rail electrification could improve connectivity and journey time

We've got these by-mode trains now that are diesel and electric. We should be wiring to Swansea because it's madness not to do that. There's a 50 mile an hour speed limit on the M4 because of pollution through Port Talbot, the railway line is running alongside it is diesel. It makes a mockery Welsh Government when they say they're trying to clean up the air by putting a speed limit on the motorway when the logical thing for them to do is put wires above the rail.

You could then use those by-modes to run a London, Cardiff, to Carmarthen service avoiding Swansea and combining with a load of five trains from Swansea coming up to Cardiff and you could run about five or six trains through to Carmarthen. Then Carmarthen becomes a railhead and you've got a chance of doing something about people then using more local trains in West Wales. Then we should be aiming for 15 to 20-minute connections between buses and trains, not five minutes.

## Frequency

- 17.** Participants felt that a more frequent public transport service running to a headway (e.g. every 20 minutes) as opposed to being scheduled for any specific time of the day would be a key tool in removing barriers to using public transport.

If you could walk up to a bus stop or platform and know that a bus or train was arriving in a few minutes, then more people would use public transport. Travel companies will see their patronage and revenue increase. One of my local lines from Chester into Liverpool was a 30-minute frequency. Most people thought it was not bad. But when they increased it to every 15 minutes, business shot up and it ended up paying for itself. If you put on a good service people will use it.

The frequency of the bus or train is a barrier. When I lived in Amsterdam, the train, the tram, and buses arrive every seven and half minutes. There is no need for a timetable, everyone knows that there will be another vehicle in seven and a half minutes, regardless. In May 2021, the Dutch Railways launched the timetable-less line between Amsterdam and Maastricht, which guarantees on average a seven and a half minute wait for the train. In 2021 the Dutch Railways made a £1.3 billion loss. But in 2022 it was even, and in 2023 it will be profitable. The Dutch Traffic Department has confirmed, that this has reduced traffic jams by 10%. And that's enough to keep it running

Between Haverfordwest and the Penblwyn Roundabout, 600 vehicles passed in an hour in one direction and 500 in the other. You'd think with that number of vehicles you'd be able to fill an extra train to make the trains every hour rather than every two. That is something that would do very well for that main route through Pembrokeshire, to have a train every hour rather than every two.

- 18.** Participants also illustrated the problems faced with a lack of evening services.

The availability of services after a certain time is a very big barrier. A lot of transport services seem to be geared to nine to five, whereas it's not really nine to five that needs to be looked at. The whole day needs to be looked at, say from 7:00 AM through till 10:00 PM. That's one of the issues that have come across in my work with GIG Buddies and Learning Disabilities Wales.

I stopped using the buses, in the end. For me, it was the problem with the last bus home. I live in Anglesey and the last bus was quite early. So that was a factor especially when I worked late.

## Capacity

- 19.** Participants agreed that rail providers did not always provide enough capacity for the expected number of passengers. Participants spoke of the overcrowded valley trains and also of capacity issues in North Wales.

There's insufficient capacity on the North Wales coast. It's a strange service because you have Avanti West Coast running along there with nine coach trains and then the next service could be a two-car Transport for Wales service. It's a massive variation in the capacity that the operators are providing. People will turn up expecting to see lots of seats and space on a train and then they end up standing all the way to Chester or even beyond if it's that bad.

In my memory, over the past few decades, the train from Chester, or occasionally Crew, to North Wales has always been ridiculously overcrowded.

## Service disruptions

**20.** Participants felt that service reliability is one of the most important aspects of public transport and when passengers experience service disruptions and cancellations they are more likely not to return to public transport.

One or two trains to Milford Haven from Manchester had been cancelled. Apparently, the train left Manchester in the morning got as far as Crew and was cancelled because there were too many passengers. This was rugby day in Cardiff. What do you expect?

We've experienced a particular problem with the Conway Valley line that was out of action for the best part of two years pre-covid because of severe flooding and remedial works. But then faced with the very sudden withdrawal of rail units as they wanted them elsewhere. If there's a shortage of units elsewhere in the system, the Conway Valley units are the first to be taken away, even if it's because they need extra units because there's a rugby game on in Cardiff. We need the certainty that the service is going to run.

Reliability is an issue. The cancellations we're seeing. Mitigating cancellations to a rail replacement bus doesn't cut it at all. If people are travelling by train, they want the train!

**21.** Participants agreed that a better response to delays and cancellations is needed by providing passengers with real-time, integrated information across all available platforms, from online to station announcements.

On the valleys lines, there are a lot of replacement bus services and it's hard to get information on them. It's not always clear where they pick up and leave from. I've been caught out before because I didn't know where the bus replacement service was leaving from. Some stations are worse than others, Pontypridd and Treforest are not very good for signage. If there's a bus replacement service, or I'm just sick of Transport for Wales, I'll just jump in the car, but not everybody can do that.

When things go wrong we need to get better at communicating with passengers. It is partly the unexpected delay and lack of information that people find so frustrating and worrying, just not knowing when you're going to complete your journey. An experience like that puts people off using public transport. They think 'I'm not going to do that again'.

It seems that trains can be cancelled and rescheduled and the expectation is on you to have a mobile phone, that can get you onto the network, to find out what the latest position is. It's your problem if you can't.

My daughter bought tickets to see the Wales football game. They bought their advanced purchase tickets to take the children. She's just checked online to find that the line between Shrewsbury and Cardiff is shut. The signalling box is closed at Hereford. Advance tickets are non-refundable so she will now be put on a bus. But she has two children who can't travel by bus. These uncertainties are major for them, this is an outing they've planned for months. If you go on the Transport for Wales website it just says the line's shut. It doesn't say when it's going to reopen. People need information readily available to make decisions because they will end up jumping in the car.

## Accessibility

**22.** Several participants with accessibility needs described the barriers they face when trying to access public transport.

Bus drivers in Llandudno do a good job to a degree but you have to remind them to help people. The buses have manual ramps to help people like me, who use a wheelchair, to get aboard. But a lot of the time you have to ask the driver to help, you have to keep them on their toes! Sometimes I have to complain to Arriva about the lack of support.

If you have mobility issues and you want to use the train you need to know if the train station is accessible, if there is step-free access, and if your pre-booked support to get onto the train from the platform will actually be available, or will it be cancelled at the last minute with no notice? You also need to know if the staff at the train station know how to support you if you have learning disabilities and don't understand the announcements

**23.** All participants agreed that making public transport accessible for everyone would remove significant barriers.

No matter where you live in Wales, whether that be in urban or rural areas, whether you are really well connected or more disconnected, there are always issues around physical accessibility for people who've got mobility support needs. If you're a wheelchair or walking frame user you want to know that the bus is going to have space for you, that the bus driver is trained in using the ramp, that the bus driver is confident about getting you on the bus, and that you can get to your seat before they drive off.

If we were able to work together to create a public transport system that worked for disabled people, older people, or people with learning disabilities, it would then automatically work for everybody else. Because, if you're meeting the needs of the most disadvantaged person by making the ticket accessible and integrated, by making the physical infrastructure accessible and easy to use, by making the information easy to read and understand, and by giving people the

option of different languages, then everybody is going to benefit. It will be accessible to all.

## First and last-mile

**24.** Many participants described the difficulties faced in getting from their front door to the bus stop or train station, and then from the final bus stop or train station to their final destination.

I can walk to the station, which takes just over an hour to walk the three miles. It's fine if it's a nice day, but probably not otherwise. And it's not the kind of thing that everyone would attempt as the journey back is uphill and takes more energy than the journey down.

The last mile is a barrier. When I get to my destination, how do I get from the station to the place I want to go to? Now I can do a lot of this myself on the web, but lots of people out there don't have that luxury at all.

**25.** Participants agreed that integrated solutions were needed to ensure the continuity of a door-to-door journey.

In a rural area like Pembrokeshire, is not sensible to have a bus connecting with every train. That is what my car should do, but in general, I should not drive further than my nearest station.

We need to integrate cycling with using the bus. Just by making it possible to put your bike on the bus would mean more people would use the bus. Especially around Snowdonia, because people would really enjoy cycling in the National Park and cycling part of the journey and then being able to take the bus when they need to.

## Demand-responsive travel

**26.** Many participants spoke of demand-responsive travel as part of the solution to the real and perceived barriers to public transport. Participants felt that the fflecsi bus was a good service but recognised some barriers when accessing the service.

The fflecsi service has worked really well for people who are younger, more social media savvy, and more connected. But for older people who are used to a timetabled service, that would run at particular fixed times, that's presented a significant barrier and we've seen that a lot of people have stopped using the public transport network as a result.

It's demand-responsive. So for somebody who wants to be picked up within the next two hours, it works really well. But for somebody who knows that they've got an appointment in ten days and they need to book their journey now so that they're confident that they will be able to make that appointment, it doesn't really work for those people.

- 27.** Some participants spoke of their experience with community transport, particularly in relation to how the service has broken down barriers experienced with public transport

A lot of people have chosen to shift to using community transport probably earlier than they would have done before because they don't feel are safe using mainstream public transport, they don't feel like it's as accessible to them as it used to be. There might be a perceived difference in terms of both the cleanliness of the vehicle, the way that the service is operated, and the support that person can access when they use community transport.

## Information

- 28.** Participants discussed the coordination and dissemination of public transport information. Participants felt that travel information was often unreliable, incorrect, and contradictory.

Communication of travel information is not consistent. There have been instances where the website has said one thing, the train indicator boards on the station have said another thing, and a specialist rail user real-time website has shown that neither of those has been true.

- 29.** Participants agreed that the lack of real-time, accurate travel information was a barrier.

Communication from public transport providers, by the rail industry in particular, when things don't work has got to get a lot better. We're in the dark ages with it. Recently, I looked on Realtime trains before I left the house and it told me the train was going to be 10 minutes late. I turned up at the station to find the train was on time and I'd missed it. I contacted Arriva about it and they said, 'Oh yeah, but the person who updates the information goes home at 5:00 o'clock'.

Young people, particularly, live on their phones. And everybody lives with real-time information, all of the time. You can use your phone to access real-time information. You should be able to find out if there's a bus in the next 20 minutes, but that's not real-time information about where the bus is. I would have thought in today's world that would be possible. Certainly, in my work, I get far too much real-time information, about everything. I could tell you where my driver is for my sofa delivery to the nearest postcode.

- 30.** Participants also described difficulties in accessing information online.
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The Transport for Wales website is difficult to use. You really have to know your way about the website. I have average IT skills, I'm not an expert but I'm not pathetic at it either. But when I try to find out when a train is running or not running the website is very difficult to navigate. So if you're not very confident with IT you'll struggle, and if you try it once and it doesn't work you lose faith in it very quickly.

You've got to remember that people, especially in rural areas, who do not have all these fancy phones really depend on old-fashioned communications.

- 31.** Participants also considered the difficulties faced by people with additional needs when accessing information.

In terms of people with disabilities, physical, sensory, and hidden disabilities. It can be an incredible challenge for somebody to pluck up the courage to say, OK, I'm going to go and get the bus or the train. Getting information and the reliability of services are factors as to why people with disabilities struggled to get out and about. There isn't enough information or it isn't easy to find.

Some bus stops don't have timetables which makes it difficult to know when your bus is supposed to arrive. Arriva customer service isn't very good either. It makes it impossible sometimes to know how to plan my journey and how to get around. As a wheelchair user, it's very important that I can plan my journey in advance.

## Timetables

- 32.** Participants appreciated the planning involved in setting out a public transport timetable. However, accessing reliable bus and rail timetable information was seen by participants as a barrier for many.

Timetables are changed too frequently. The timetable in Snowdonia has been changed fundamentally three times in the last 12 months. You go to the bus stop and find out that it has just gone and you have to wait an hour or so.

- 33.** Participants agreed that navigating the online timetable systems could be a barrier to new or returning passengers, people who struggle to use the internet, and people with learning difficulties, for example.

Getting travel information digitally is not easy for everyone, often the vulnerable and elderly are excluded from being able to access solutions that they might really need.

- 34.** The majority of participants felt that the paper timetable should be reintroduced.

There's one very old-fashioned thing which we no longer have, and that is the printed timetable. It was a very useful thing to have in your pocket. I took that one up with a councillor. His point of view was that they had to look for cost savings and that anybody who uses the bus service 'should know their route anyway'.

Post-covid they need to move back to printed material both in the book format and also at bus stops. It doesn't necessarily have to be paper form at bus stops. There are now systems available that can display the information electronically. Information about services and fares can be provided far better in the future, but it shouldn't just be online only.

## Ticketing and fares

**35.** Participants discussed ticketing in relation to affordability and pricing inconsistencies.

One of the barriers is the affordability of rail. We've just had yet another increase in rail fares. From Cardiff to London, the trains going through Newport station are so lightly loaded that it's disappointing, frustrating, and annoying. People are being priced off these services. I appreciate that as they get nearer London, passenger numbers increase. Then the first off-peak train from Swansea is far busier because that's the one you can use the cheaper off-peak fares on. Rail operators need to address affordability

People are getting concerned about affording to pay for food, heating, and transport. What is that going to mean in terms of people's health deteriorating because people do not go to the absolutely essential appointments?

A colleague who's based in Monmouthshire has to pay £8.00 for a day ticket on the bus, in the Cardiff Capital Region. I'm earning good money, but that is expensive for me. £8.00 for a day's travel and you're only able to use one mode of transport.

**36.** Participants highlighted unfair pricing of tickets whereby similar length journeys can differ greatly in price.

In West Wales, we suffer quite a lot in comparison with the cost per mile. I compared the costs from Clynderwen to Carmarthen, which is 20 miles. When you compare 20 miles from Cardiff to Merthyr, I'm paying 3 three times as much. I think that's a barrier to public transport use in West Wales.

## Integrated Ticketing

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**37.** Participants all agreed that the lack of integrated multi-modal tickets for public transport services was a significant barrier to users and non-users.

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Ticket integration is a big thing, tickets must be multi-modal which entitles you to travel on any operator within the region so that you have a seamless step-free transition from train to bus, or bus to bus, and so on.

Integrated ticketing. It's a fairly simple idea, but with all the different transport providers, tickets aren't integrated at all. When I used to commute I would try not to get the bus after my rail journey as it was another ticket and another expense.

Some people have booked tickets from Chester to North Wales where the small print says not valid on Avanti services. The Avanti conductor then explains they either have to get off or buy another ticket. Three weeks ago I saw two separate individuals be told by an assertive conductor that they had to get off the train. The conductor relented in the end. But if you buy a ticket it should be valid on any reasonable service on any reasonable route.

**38.** Participants suggested several ticketing models.

I used to live in Berlin which had a very good public transport system. Passengers could purchase a single integrated ticket, with which they can travel on and change to various means of transport, from the place of departure to the place of arrival.

In Germany, you load up your ticket with trips. It doesn't matter if you use all of your trips in a week, month, or year. Your ticket is usage-based rather than time-based which allows you not to have to think about the different costs but is flexible and works around your needs and ad hoc working routine. For example next week I might only need to go in once and the week after I might need to go in three times. Buying a weekly ticket would be a waste of money, but buying a single would be expensive. Whereas an integrated ticket with paid trips would suit me and be cost-effective.

## Infrastructure-related design

**39.** When considering the barriers to using public transport, participants identified issues related to infrastructure-related design.

Decisions are made about where facilities, shops, and developments are going to be built. Those decisions must be linked to transport provision. It's a chicken and egg question, but it needs to be understood and thought about.

There is a decision going on at the moment about where to cite the new West Wales Hospital. It could be somewhere between Narberth and St Clair's. But will it be near the railway? Will it be near the road? Is the plan to build the hospital just working on the amount of money it will spend or the amount of money I will spend getting there and the convenience to me?

There are a lot of new housing developments being built that are not suitable for public transport. Estates with very winding roads which are great if you've got a car, but you try taking a full-size bus down there, you're not getting it down there. Policy needs to be in place to make sure that these housing developments are centred around public transport hubs.

**40.** Some participants felt that car parking within cities and towns was counterproductive.

Car parking is something that should be on the periphery of a city or town. It shouldn't be right in the centre, that should be for buses, cyclists, and pedestrians.

## Competing with the car

There's been too much of a mindset over the years that the trains are in competition with buses. No, they're not. Buses and trains together are in competition with the private car. Until we get that mindset sorted we're getting nowhere.

**41.** Participants agreed that substantial changes are needed if public transport is to compete with the private car.

There is always the choice to take the car. You've got to make public transport better than the car. The fuel duty, the greenness, yes, we've all got that in our heads. But at the end of the day, if the alternative is worse than the car people won't use it. You can play the green card for as long as you like, but people will revert to the car.

It's got to be that the trains or the buses make themselves more attractive. We have to change the product.

**42.** Participants felt that public transport has to beat the car on cost, as this is the only area in which public transport can win.

I recently went on holiday and caught the train to the airport. For both me and my partner, an open return from Cardiff Central to Bristol airport was £55. We had bags with us, so we also had a taxi from the house to the station, which was an additional £7. I was expecting it to be cheaper. For convenience, I should have done that journey in the car and paid for airport parking. If I'd left the car at the airport it would have been a bit cheaper and much more convenient.

Public transport will never be more convenient than a car so it has to beat it on cost, if it doesn't beat it on cost it becomes harder to make a justification to leave the car and get on the train. Especially with the extra effort, it takes to get to the

station from your house and that sometimes you have to run to catch your connecting train as there might only be minutes between them.

The cost of the car and taxation of travel should be based on use rather than ownership. A car is doing nobody any harm when it's parked in the garage or on a driveway and not being used. Why not tax mileage when the car is MOT'd?

## Public perception

**43.** Participants felt that there were several components to the issue of public perception and that developing a positive public perception is key to breaking down barriers.

People's perception of public transport in terms of its convenience, cost, and all those long-standing issues are more of a factor than fear of the pandemic. It's those topics that are the main constraint, rather than 'I might get COVID'.

The idea of having a very clean, easy-to-use, and fast option for public transport is what we want. Because I'd say that the general perception is the opposite, dirty, slow, and not easy to use.

### Public perception of buses

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**44.** Participants agreed that the general public has a negative perception of bus travel.

I remember talking to a colleague who was discussing ways in which she could get to work, when I asked if there was a convenient bus service she recoiled in horror and said 'I would never use the bus!'. There's that perception. Unfortunately, travelling by bus is seen as the option for people who can't afford anything else.

**45.** Participants felt that perceived perceptions included poor cleanliness, unreliable service, unnecessarily long journeys, unsafe environment (particularly at night), and that bus travel is predominantly used by people on low incomes.

Buses are not well-liked and looked down on a little bit. I used to work for the council and I would catch a bus to a meeting colleagues would judge me for using the bus. I never saw anyone else travel to those meetings by bus.

### Public perception of trains

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**46.** Participants felt that trains had a more positive public perception. Some participants felt that the public enjoys train journeys and perceives the service to be fast, clean, and accessible.

I don't think rail has an image problem in the same way that buses do. The idea of being stuck in traffic or on a bus is so unappealing. But even in rush hour I can sit down, and listen to a podcast on a clean train. I enjoy the walk to the station and I think of my rail commute as me time. Whereas that wouldn't be the case in a car or on a bus.

**47.** However, participants also agreed that negative public perception centred on travel costs, delays, cancellations, and stereotypes.

The railway's brand awareness is probably still in stale sandwiches, unpunctuality, and overcrowding. Surveys at Tesco Milford Haven have revealed that people think that there are only about half as many trains as there are, that they all just go to Carmarthen, and cost twice as much to travel on as they do.

## Understanding the post-Covid passenger

**48.** Most participants agreed understanding the passenger is key to overcoming barriers and developing an efficient transport service.

You've got to go back to basics and identify the market to address the market, and so we've got to know where people want to go, not where the train planners want these trains to go. We've got to identify the hotspots and the events. And not just Cardiff rugby. We've really got to go back to basics, identify the market and address that market.

The economy in North Wales is driven largely by the leisure and tourist economy. So there's a need to transport people in and out of North Wales for the day. We're not going to get many people from Cardiff travelling up to North Wales for the day to go to the beach, especially with an eight hour round trip on the train.

**49.** Some participants suggested that changes to public transport needed to consider those who currently use the transport system and have no other means of transport to use.

We need to be mindful of the people that are already using the public transport system. It might not be a perfect system, but it is a system that they understand. We need to take those people with us and not disenfranchise them even further by thinking about getting more commuters out of their cars and redesigning the bus service to make it a really attractive and sexy service for people who are currently using their private vehicles. What will happen to people who now can't get to their relatives to support with caring responsibilities? To make sure that their loved one has had a wash and had breakfast in the morning? What happens when the bus isn't running there anymore as it's not a commuter or leisure route? Or the app isn't going to allow them to have a pick-up because it's already full of people who are going to work?

## Seasonal demand

**50.** Participants from the North and West of Wales spoke about the seasonality of the public transport demand on the existing system, particularly in light of the pandemic.

This phenomenon of 0 visitors to manic excessive numbers of visitors at the drop of a hat is an issue. It seemed that half of Liverpool and half of Manchester came to North Wales before you could say Johnny Bach and in every area around Anglesey. The beaches were absolutely chock-a-block. So the solution has to go to all tourist areas in Wales.

We saw that in Pembrokeshire we had one of the busiest years for decades. Yet the train service and public transport setup were abysmal.

A key change is the use of social media such as Instagram, to draw attention to particular locations. For the first time, this has directly driven transport and visitor pressures at locations that previously didn't have that. People were making somewhere popular by posting about it on social media. That's created a demand for parking and transport in areas that have had a sudden spike in visitors. It's only during the pandemic that this has become obvious as an on-the-ground rapid change. This is a challenge in the flexibility and design of the transport system to adapt.

**51.** Participants recognised the problem of providing an effective public transport system that serves both residents and visitors.

One of the big challenges here in Snowdonia is how to address both the needs of visitors and local communities. We can picture a future with a really good infrastructure for our visitors, but if we haven't matched that with what's needed for the people in our the communities, who need to get to the medical centre or their place of work, then we haven't solved the problem.

**52.** Participants living in Welsh tourist areas felt that a key objective is to optimise and improve public transport for residents and visitors so that the car is left at home.

We need to make it very, very easy for the hundreds of thousands of visitors to use public transport. And make it difficult for them to use their cars because the cars and the number of people are going to eventually have an irreversibly negative impact, and we're already on the way there.

Visitors to North Wales predominantly come from Northern England. Many of them are day visitors. They never even think about using public transport, the knee jerk reaction is to get to North Wales by car. Once those cars are in North

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Wales there is a mindset that doesn't even think in terms of using public transport, it's just not on.

**53.** Participants suggested that visitor traffic needed to be intercepted to channel the visitors from the car onto public transport,.

Intercepting the large amounts of visitors arriving by car to Welsh tourist areas is key. We must intercept that traffic in a way that links to our transport system.

**54.** Participants also suggested that visitors lack local public transport knowledge and that more should be done to promote public transport options.

The new T10 bus service is very welcome. But we are concerned that so few people seem to use it compared to the large number of cars parked along its route. There are concerns that visitors are unaware of this service. It's a marvellous service which is actually so good that my trepidation is that having seen so few people on it, it may not last as long as it should. I've never seen more than six people on it

I still see hundreds of cars parked around, with full car parks. Visitors haven't even heard of that bus app. Visitors know about some of the public transport options available, but I don't think there's much knowledge among visitors about any other routes.

## 4. How to address the barriers to using Welsh bus and rail services and increase public transport use

Participants identified some ideas that they felt would support improvements to the Welsh bus and rail services.

- 1. Integrated ticketing** to provide passengers with transferability across different modes, operators, and geographies.
- 2. Flexible ticketing** to enable passengers to block buy trips to take when they want.
- 3. Real-time integrated travel information** across all available platforms, from online to station announcements, from one information provider.
- 4. Sensible connection times** between modes of transport to give enough time for all passengers to successfully board their connection.

- 5. Public transport to run to a headway** (time between vehicles) as opposed to being scheduled for any specific time of the day.
- 6. Provision to transport bicycles** on public transport
- 7. The reintroduction of paper timetables**
- 8. Integration of transport policy** with other policies affecting land use planning or infrastructure-related investments, such as hospitals and housing developments.
- 9. Improve Newport to Pembrokeshire rail services** by:
  - a. addressing the 'dogleg' in Swansea;
  - b. completing the electrification of the South Wales mainline;
  - c. developing Carmarthen as a railhead to provide more frequent trains across West Wales; and
  - d. a two-hourly service to Fishguard.
- 10. Improve public transport services in North Wales** by:
  - a. developing routes beyond the main transport corridor of Holyhead, Bangor, Conway, and Chester;
  - b. developing East to West public transport routes, connectivity, and frequency;
  - c. reopening the Bangor to Caernarvon railway line; and
  - d. intercepting and directing day visitor traffic to a public transport interchange where visitors continue on their journey using public transport.